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LETTER DATED 5 AUGUST 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you of an incident that took place on 25 and 26 July 1996. At 2300 hours on 25 July, as it was approaching Khawr al-Amayah and heading for the entrance to Khawr Abd Allah, the Iraqi tender Al-Fida' was followed and provoked by a United States Navy helicopter. Despite the fact that the tender responded to the questions addressed to it through various means of communication concerning its name, its point of departure, its destination, the number of crew members on board and the cargo being carried, those on board the helicopter nevertheless continued to impede its departure and to place it in danger. At 0005 hours on 26 July the personnel of the United States helicopter again made contact with the crew of the tender and asked it to proceed to an area designated by them for purposes of inspection. A helicopter then overflew the tender at low altitude, turning on bright lights and issuing warnings through its loud hailer. At 0100 hours the tender arrived at a point six nautical miles south-west of Mina' al-Bakr and was required by the United States Navy to remain there until morning.

At 0600 hours United States warship No. 39 approached and asked for the same information as before. In the meantime, a boat set out from the same warship with 18 heavily armed United States Navy personnel on board carrying communications equipment. They boarded the tender, deployed throughout the vessel and took the names of the crew members and a copy of its papers. At 0730 hours the United States Navy personnel left the tender.

I request your intervention with the Government of the United States of America with a view to bringing a halt to acts such as these. They have become more frequent in recent times, and they are carried out by United States Navy personnel without justification or provocation in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law. They confirm that it is the intention of the United States Government to exacerbate tension in the region and to bring about a state of alarm and instability there for its own particular purposes. I also affirm the legally established right of the Republic of Iraq to compensation for the damage caused by this provocative act.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative